

**South River Programmatic Restoration
Environmental Assessment
(EA # OR 105-04-03)**

**Weaver Creek Instream Habitat Enhancement
Decision Document**

Prepared: June 9, 2005

Decision:

It is my decision to authorize placement of trees and logs in portions of Weaver Creek to create instream and enhance habitat structure and complexity. Instream structures will be placed in the stream channel at 16 locations. These structures will be composed of 40-55 foot-long logs, provided by the felling of approximately 25 trees. Logs will be positioned either by felling the trees directly into the stream, or by felling and winching logs or entire trees into place.

The project area consists of a one-quarter mile reach in Section 9, T. 29 S., R. 3 W. and a onemile reach in Section 32, T. 28 S., R. 3 W. Field Office hydrology and fishery personnel have identified a deficiency of large woody debris resulting in: a reduction in pool complexity and volume; a lack of retention of gravel substrate; and reduced availability of spawning and rearing habitat for anadromous and resident salmonids. The project is funded under Title II of the "Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000."

The following project design features will be implemented:

- All equipment will be pressure washed or steam cleaned prior to mobilization in and out of the project area to minimize the risk of introducing soil from outside the project area that may be contaminated with noxious weed seed or other propagative materials. Any equipment removed during the life of the contract must be re-cleaned before being returned to the project area.
- In-stream work will be restricted to the period between July 1 and September 15, during low summer flows, consistent with conditions of the General Authorization of the Oregon Division of State Lands, and under permit from the Oregon Department of Forestry, unless otherwise coordinated with the ODFW and approved in writing by ODSL.
- Trees selected for felling will be a minimum of 25 feet from the stream bank in order to maintain streamside shade and protect stream bank integrity and stability.

Rationale for the Decision:

This project was analyzed under Alternative 2 of the South River Programmatic Watershed Restoration EA. Its implementation will aid in meeting the objectives of restoring normal stream function by: aggrading the stream channel; improving aquatic habitat conditions in Weaver Creek by providing for longer retention of suitably-sized spawning substrates; and creating

complex pool habitat for rearing and sheltering of anadromous and resident salmonids. Alternative 1, the no action alternative, would not meet these objectives.

Placement of the instream structures in Weaver Creek will not result in any undue environmental degradation. The project is consistent with Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives contained in the ROD/RMP (pp. 20-21), in that it will help: maintain and restore in-stream flows; maintain and restore the natural sediment regime; and maintain restore aquatic habitat. The project also implements management direction to restore stream channel complexity (ROD/RMP, p. 20).

Northern Spotted Owl

The portion of the project site in Section 9, T. 29 S., R. 3 W., W.M. is located in suitable nesting, roosting and foraging habitat for the Federally-threatened northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*) and crosses through an owl activity center. The portion of the project located in Section 32, T. 28 S., R. 3 W., W.M. meanders through forest habitat that only provides dispersal habitat. Neither of the areas is situated in designated critical habitat.

Surveys have determined that the owl pair in Section 9 has not successfully nested this year. Consequently, the potential for disturbance during nesting season does not exist.

To avoid adversely affecting habitat, particularly where the stream passes through the owl activity center in Section 9, trees would be selected for felling consistent with project design criteria described in the EA (p. 30). Specifically:

- Trees with characteristics suitable for nesting will not be selected. Among factors described in the EA, these characteristics include trees with large amounts of decay, cavities and broken tops.
- Trees will be selected that do not provide overhead canopy cover or obvious protection and screening of potential nest trees. To the greatest extent practicable, trees will be selected from the intermediate canopy in such a fashion that the creation of canopy gaps is minimized.

As a consequence, effects on the utility of nesting, roosting, foraging, and dispersal habitat in the two areas will be negligible and are unlikely to have any adverse effect on spotted owls in the general vicinity of the project area.

Vascular and Non-vascular Plants

The project area was surveyed for those special status species described in the EA (pp. 17-18). The results of these surveys were negative, so there is no anticipated effect from implementation of the instream project.

Fish and Essential Fish Habitat

Weaver Creek provides spawning and rearing habitat for the proposed Federal-threatened Oregon coast coho salmon, and Oregon Coast steelhead trout, a candidate-threatened species.

The lower reaches of Weaver Creek are also designated as Essential Fish Habitat. The effects to these species and Essential Fish Habitat are primarily derived from sediment generated by the disturbance of stream banks and stream channels in association with tree felling and winching, judged as “likely to adversely affect” coho salmon and an “adverse effect” on Essential Fish Habitat.

Actions of this nature were programmatically consulted with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and are addressed in *Endangered Species Act – Section 7 and Magnuson-Stevens Act Essential Fish Habitat Consultation Programmatic Biological and Conference Opinion for Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, and BIA/Coquille Indian Tribe Programmatic Activities Affecting SONC Coho Salmon, OC Coho Salmon, and OC Steelhead*, dated October 18, 2002.

The Biological and Conference Opinion sets forth Reasonable and Prudent Measures, and Terms and Conditions, in conjunction with authorization of Incidental Take. This project implements the Reasonable and Prudent Measures and is consistent with Terms and Conditions of the Biological and Conference Opinion.

Monitoring:

Monitoring would be done in accordance with the ROD/RMP, Appendix I (pp. 84, 190, 193, & 195-199), with emphasis on the following resources: Riparian Reserves; Water and Soils; Wildlife Habitat; Fish Habitat; and Special Status Species Habitat.

Protest Procedures:

As outlined in 43 CFR § 5003 - Administrative Remedies, protests may be filed with the authorized officer within 15 days of the publication date of the Decision Notice in *The News-Review*, Roseburg, Oregon.

43 CFR 5003.3 subsection (b) states that: “Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer and shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision.” This precludes the acceptance of electronic mail or facsimile protests. Only written and signed hard copies of protests that are delivered to the Roseburg District Office will be accepted.

William S. Haigh
South River Field Manager
South River Field Office

Date